7/29/72: Copies of this letter went to several papers. Text of report was reprinted in TIMES. It is worse than my letter indicates, and so far I've seen no press coverage contesting the findsings--just the opposite, in fact. My own analysis is that Nixon dare not try to wipe out the dikes. However, it seems very possible to me that whatever strikes there were were deliberate, with the intent of scaring NVN into believing that US is out to get the dikes. At any rate, the official US position that we won't bomb the dikes is a deception because we've said we'd bomb them if there were "military targets" on them, like roads, or MIGS. And if the hits so far on the dikes were "accidents," (which must make the NVNese feel a hell of a lot better) then our new "smart" bombs aren't so "smart" after-all.

If my letter should appear in the Post, I'd appreciate it if you could send me the clipping. I can't get the Post up here. Thanks, HR

Return

8/3/72- This letter appeared in one Phila paper today.

July 29, 1972

Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Sir:

Simple analysis reveals that the State Department's report concerning the bombing of the dikes in North Vietnam is both meaningless and deceptive. It is a further demonstration of the utter lack of credibility in any official United States pronouncements involving its bombing policy in Vietnam.

The report claims to refute allegations of damage to the dikes made by North Vietnam between April and June of 1972. However, the aerial reconnaissance photographs on which the report is based were taken in mid-July of 1972. The report freely admits that the damage inflicted by one large bomb crater could be repaired by the North Vietnamese without great difficulty in one day. Obviously, if the North Vietnamese repaired the damage to the dikes which they say was produced between April and June, and if they made their repairs prior to mid-July, the damage would not appear in the photographs discussed in the State Department's report. Furthermore, since the nature of the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam demands constant aerial reconnaissance, it must be asked why no photographs of the time period in question were studied; surely such photos were made.

The State Department contends that the pictures studied (but withheld from public view) reveal 12 bomb craters along the dikes, and that none of the damage produced by them has been major. President Nixon has charged the North Vietnamese with a "propaganda" campaign because, he alleged, they have not repaired the dmage to the dikes and instead, they have exhibited this damage to reporters from other countries. Again, it is obvious that North Vietnam must preserve some proof of its allegations. It may be inferred from the State Department's report that the damage which is being preserved is that of a less than serious nature. If all the damage alleged by North Vietnam has really taken place, it most likely would have been repaired as soon as possible depending on its extent. Without any proof, North Vietnam would be at the mercy of U.S. bombers which could well wipe out the dikes, even if "by accident." Because North Vietnam preserved some proof that its dikes had been bombed, it was able to rally world opinion and force the United States to restrain its bombers in a small but necessary way. Too often we forget that North Vietnam is fighting for its very survival, threatened by a brutal and usually indiscriminate bombing policy.

With the revelations of the "Pentagon Papers," the episode with General Lavelle, and now the deception of this State Department report, it is clear just who is really waging a propaganda campaign.

Sincerely,

Howard Roffman
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